

VZCZCXRO0501

OO RUEHBC RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDE RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW  
RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJA #0772/01 1080913  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 170913Z APR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8726  
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2353  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 3391  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2557  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4954  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1840  
RUEHBA/AMCONSUL PERTH 0717  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2607  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000772

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/PD, DRL/AWH, EEB/CIP/BA  
NSC FOR E.PHU  
USTR FOR K.EHLERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [ECPS](#) [EINT](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: C-D18-00223: AFTER SHARP OUTCRY, GOI RESTORES  
YOUTUBE

REF: A. JAKARTA 719

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 674

[1](#)C. JAKARTA 655

[1](#)D. STATE 20822

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOI has issued an abject public apology in lifting its order requiring that Internet service providers prevent access to YouTube and a handful of other websites. In taking the action, the GOI was responding to angry complaints from civil society advocates, business leaders, the media and the public in general. The government had temporarily banned the websites in order to restrict access to the anti-Islamic film "Fitna." The GOI--in trying to appeal to Islamic groups--got burned, the backlash reflecting the strength of public sensitivities regarding information access and connectivity in this nascent democracy. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) MINISTER SAYS "SORRY": Following an outpouring of complaints from business and civil society leaders, the GOI reversed its decision to blockade websites that carried the controversial anti-Islamic film, "Fitna". (Note: Per ref A, two weeks ago, Indonesian Internet service providers blocked YouTube, MySpace, Metacafe, Rapidshare and LiveLeak based on ministerial instructions.) On April 11, Information and Communications Minister Muhammad Nuh apologized for the temporary ban, telling the press, "I openly ask the public's forgiveness for the inconvenience caused over the past few days by the blocking of sites." He added, a bit defensively: "This was all a consequence of a process designed to protect the state." Other GOI contacts said the government took the move to protect "public sensitivities."

[1](#)3. (SBU) After the ban was lifted, Internet service providers immediately restored access to YouTube and the other blocked websites. According to Director General of Information Technology Cahyana Ahmadjayadi, the Information Ministry's intent all along was to block offensive content, not websites. In the meantime, the government has half-heartedly taken another tack on the matter. In a letter

issued on April 10, the Information Ministry invited service providers to filter content related to "Fitna"--rather than the websites that host the videos--by blocking the ten most popular uniform resource locators (URL) specific to "Fitna". Chair of the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), Sylvia Sumarlin, told Mission that as of April 15 she had received no complaints about the filtering of "Fitna" content. That said, "Fitna" is hard to come by.

14. (C) THE PROTESTS: The ban sparked a sharp outcry. Civil society advocates, business leaders, the media and the public in general led the successful protest against the GOI's action. Local press reported on small business complaints on the blocking of Multiply--a site used to sell goods. These owners and thousands of other users lodged complaints to their service providers. Media advocates also protested, calling the ban tantamount to censorship. The Independent Alliance of Journalists (AJI) likened the action to "banning all bookstores because you don't agree with the contents of one book." An outpouring of news stories and critical editorials added to the civil society pressure. Alvin Lie, a member of the national legislature, told Pol/C on April 17 that "the government's action just was not tenable; Indonesians want to live in a free society and have gotten used to that. When the government got the message of the protests and heard the anger, they backed down."

15. (C) GOOGLE COMMENTS: Google continued to pursue the matter with the GOI throughout the brouhaha over the temporary website ban. Cahyana of the Information Ministry claimed that Google's Director of Public Policy Andrew McLaughlin had agreed to block access to "Fitna" content through YouTube in Indonesia. However, Jake Hubert of Google's Asian Government Affairs insisted it made no such

JAKARTA 00000772 002 OF 002

commitment, but rather that Google had asked the Information Ministry to provide it with a list of specific videos believed to violate Indonesian law. Google would then evaluate those videos, Hubert told us. As of April 15, the Ministry had not provided that list and had not responded to Google's written request for a follow up meeting to discuss the situation.

16. (C) THE GOI GETS BURNED: The GOI, quite transparently, put the ban in motion in order to appease Islamic groups. And it is the case that the film "Fitna" had sparked protests here (see ref B). In the process, however the GOI got burned, its action generating a sharp backlash. That reaction reflected the strength of public sensitivities and the strong desire for information access and connectivity in this nascent democracy. The Indonesian government--if it has learned anything--will be much more careful next time when it considers such a step.

HUME